



ACT WITH LOVE · LETTING GO

A FORGIVENESS RITUAL

Some hurts keep getting replayed and slowly poison the present. A forgiveness ritual is a concrete way for a couple to set one down together. In ACT, forgiveness means loosening your grip on the resentment so it stops running your days, a choice you make for your own freedom. It does not mean the hurt was acceptable, it does not mean forgetting, and it is not something anyone is obligated to do.

WHAT FORGIVENESS MEANS HERE

For your sake, not theirs

- Forgiveness in this sense is releasing your hold on the pain, again and again, so it stops shaping how you treat each other now. It's for you.
- It does not require deciding the hurt was okay, and it is never required, especially where there was abuse or betrayal that is still unsafe. Only take this up when it's genuinely your choice.
- Holding on has its own costs, it keeps the wound active and colors the present. A ritual makes the choice to set it down concrete and shared.
- Do this together only when both partners are willing and steady enough. If the wound is large or still raw, it's work to bring to couples therapy, not to force at home.



THE FIVE STEPS

Adapt it to make it your own; the point is a shared, deliberate act of letting go.

- 1 Name what you've been holding**
Each of you writes down the thoughts, feelings, and memories you've been carrying, how holding on has hurt the relationship, and the values you want to build on instead.
- 2 Write your commitment**
In your own words, write a commitment to let these painful thoughts and feelings come and go, again and again, however many times they return, without gripping them or getting swept up in them.
- 3 Read it aloud, together**
Choose a place that means something (a room, a park, a beach). One reads while the other listens with full attention and compassion, then swap. Agree on this beforehand.
- 4 Mark starting over**
Do something that symbolizes a fresh start, for example burn the letters and scatter the ashes, or bury them. Decide together in advance what you'll do.
- 5 Reconnect**
End with something warm, a long hug, a meal out, a bath together, a walk. Choose it in advance so the ritual closes on connection.

A ritual doesn't erase what happened, and it isn't a single fix. It marks a choice the two of you make together, to stop letting the old hurt run the present, and it may be one you return to more than once. If the wound is large or still raw, bring it to couples therapy rather than forcing it at home. Adapted from Russ Harris's *ACT with Love* (the forgiveness ritual, ch. 22). My Mental Climb is not affiliated with or endorsed by Russ Harris or the developers of ACT.

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